

**INTRO:** While traveling along a forest road, the PCs come across a grisly scene...pools of blood in the dirt and a dead body lying in the ditch. There are obvious signs of a struggle and the man's body has been picked over. Trackers can determine that (3) humans in common boots led a woman and child away into the woods. The tracks lead to a ruined fortification in a woodland clearing. It is now the lair of murderous bandits who plan to ransom the dead man's wife to her family in a nearby town. Unbeknownst to the bandits, a secret lies beneath the cellar.

**THE RUINED FORTIFICATION** was the keep of old "King" Aethelberd, a ruthless warlord who once ruled over this region with an iron fist. He was laid to rest in a crypt beneath the foundations of his stronghold, which fell into ruin over the centuries. The upper floor has partially collapsed, filling the interior with piles of rubble. The entrance is blocked with planks, leaving a narrow gap for a single person to squeeze through.

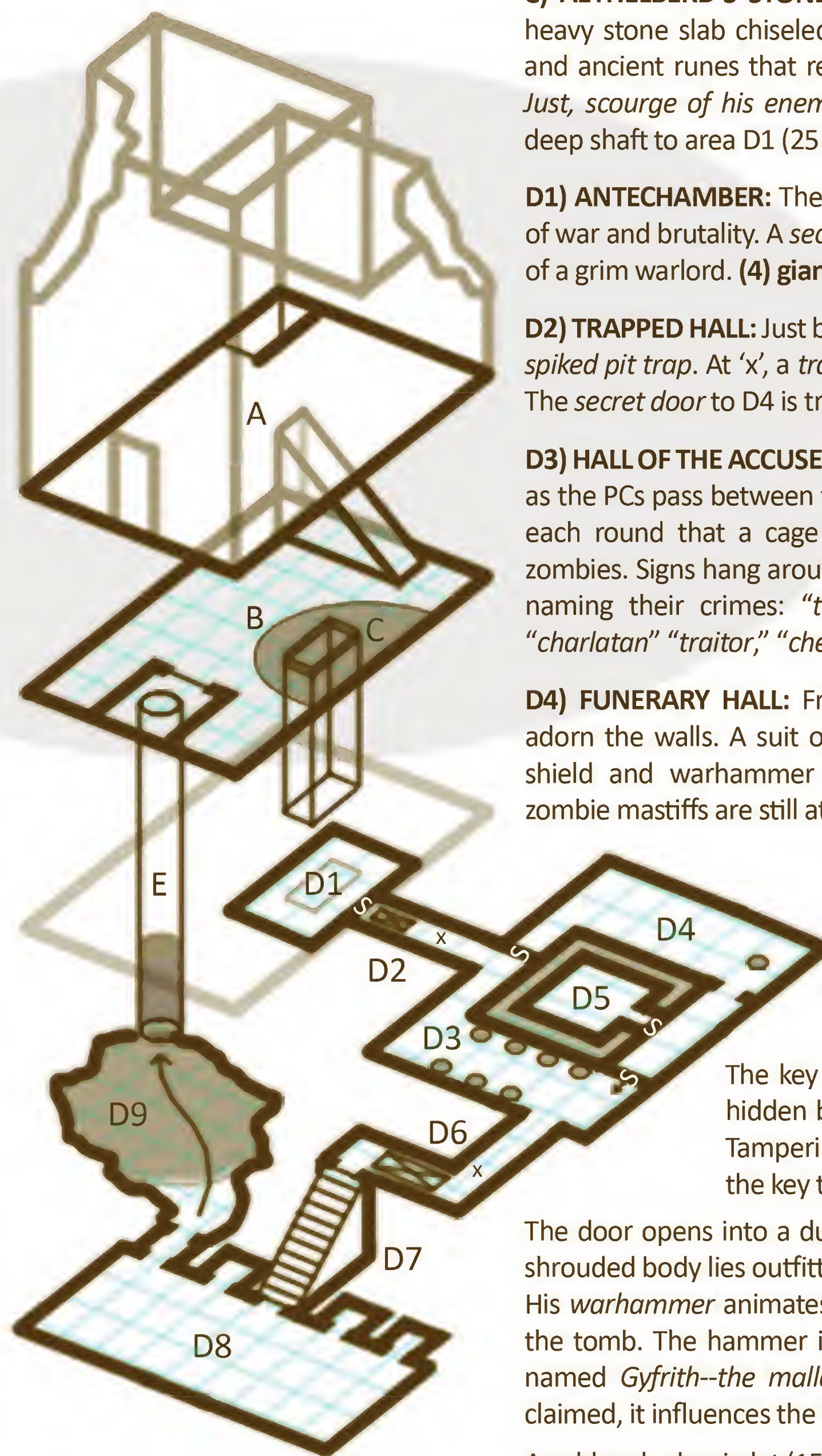
**A) BANDIT LAIR:** The bandits have cleared away an area in the middle for their camp, as well as a path to the cellar stairs. **(5) bandits** and their **boss** live in filthy conditions here. Each bandit has leather armor and a short sword, and carries 3d6 sp and 1d6 gp. The boss has studded leather and a long sword, and carries double-loot plus a key to the wellhouse gate in B.

**B) DINGY CELLAR:** Rickety stairs lead down to a dank cellar. A pile of trash molders on one wall. Quiet sobs come from a locked wellhouse on the far wall. **(6) rats** and **(2) giant rats** live in the trash pile and will attack. Hidden under the debris is an old marker stone (C). The kidnapped wife and child huddle in the wellhouse, crying softly. If rescued, she claims that something was whispering to her from the well.

**E) SCARY WELL:** The well is 50 ft. deep, but the water level is at the 40 ft. mark. Exploring the well shaft has a 1-in-6 chance per minute of attracting a tentacle attack (see D9). Entering the water or making loud noise triggers an automatic attack. The tentacle can't attack above the 20 ft. mark.

**D9) DARK POOL:** The fourth alcove opens onto a gravel beach sloping 5 ft. to the waterline and to 10 ft. on the far side of the cave (which is completely submerged and feeds the well). A hideous **tentacle monster** lives in the pool. It has a frog-like body and hind legs, two long tentacles instead of forelimbs, and a single eye on a long stalk. It makes weird whispering noises, and attacks with its *tentacles* (20 ft. reach; hit *grapples* target) and a *gulping bite* (swallows victims whole). The shadow from D8 might also take the opportunity to attack lone PCs.

Hidden at the bottom of the well is a locked chest containing: 100 gp, 300 sp, (4) gems worth 5d10 gp each, (1) gem worth 100 gp, and a +1 *dagger*.



**D8) FAMILY CRYPT:** Three alcoves hold coffins containing the shrouded bodies of Aethelberd's wives and daughter. One of the wives' bodies holds the crooked iron key to D5. His daughter's body wears wizard robes and holds a *wand of burning hands* with (3) charges and a *spell scroll*. Her evil **shadow** lurks in the room, eager to ambush unwary victims.

**C) AETHELBERD'S STONE:** Beneath the trash pile is a heavy stone slab chiseled with the figure of a warrior and ancient runes that read: "Here lies Aethelberd the Just, scourge of his enemies." The slab covers a 15 ft. deep shaft to area D1 (25 ft. total drop).

**D1) ANTECHAMBER:** The walls are painted with scenes of war and brutality. A *secret door* lies behind the image of a grim warlord. **(4) giant rats** appear in (3) rounds.

**D2) TRAPPED HALL:** Just beyond the door is a 10 ft. deep *spiked pit trap*. At 'x', a *trap* fires (3) javelins up the hall. The *secret door* to D4 is trapped with a *fire ward*.

**D3) HALL OF THE ACCUSED:** **(7) caged zombies** attack as the PCs pass between them. There is a 3-in-6 chance each round that a cage opens, releasing one of the zombies. Signs hang around each of the zombies' necks naming their crimes: "thief," "agitator," "murderer," "charlatan," "traitor," "cheat," and "heretic."

**D4) FUNERARY HALL:** Frescoes of Aethelberd's burial adorn the walls. A suit of **animated armor** wielding a shield and warhammer guards the chamber. If the zombie mastiffs are still at D5, they also join the battle.

**D5) AETHELBERD'S CRYPT:** **(3) zombie mastiffs** lurk in the hall outside the crypt at 'x' unless the trap at D6 has been triggered.

The key from D8 opens a *secret door* hidden behind a fresco of Aethelberd. Tampering with the door without using the key triggers a *lightning ward*.

The door opens into a dusty crypt, where Aethelberd's shrouded body lies outfitted in chain mail and +1 *shield*. His *warhammer* animates and attacks anyone entering the tomb. The hammer is a +1 *lawful-neutral weapon* named *Gyfrith--the mallet of justice*. If defeated and claimed, it influences the wielder to act in a LN manner.

A gold and ruby circlet (150 gp) rests on his head. A chest under his bier holds 20 gold bars (5 gp each), 30 silver bars (2 gp each), and a jeweled torc (100 gp).

**D6) TRAPPED HALL:** At 'x', a 10 ft. deep *pit* drops open ahead. A one-way *secret door* then opens in D3 for (1) round, releasing the zombie mastiffs at D5 and catching the PCs between the undead dogs and the open pit.

**D7) TRAPPED STAIRS:** A hidden pressure plate on the middle step triggers a crippling *scythe blade trap*.